

Gertie Gales Allotment Association AGM

28th September 2022 – Folk Hall, Portishead

1. 2022 AGM meeting notes approved without corrections

2. Election of Committee for 2022 – 2023

Chair – Stuart Armstrong

Secretary – Evelyn Grounsell

Treasurer – Robert Baylis

Site Manager – Steve Loblely

Lettings Officer – Les Curwood

Media Officer – unfilled

Other committee members without position remains the same as before
Alan Harrison, Bob Sheppard, Gilli Shorey, Kate Knight, Roger Howard.

Portishead Town Councillors remains the same as before
Bob Cartwright, Paul Churchill.

3. Reports

Chairman's Report

Allotments run very well over the last 12 months with little input from the Committee
New Toilet at the top & shed at lower end of allotment built over the last year
Whips growing well over the last year & more will be planted
Hedges will be cut soon
Will need new shed in the next 12 months

Treasurer Report

Bank account healthy with £556 in the savings account and anticipate circa £200 in the current account at the end of the financial year
Only one more loan payment left in May 2023. We will then be debt free
Major spend over the last year has been 4 new mowers

Lettings Officer Report

This report covers the time from January 2020.

In 2020 we had a very large number of applications during the coronavirus restrictions, 47 applications from 22nd March 2020 to 31st December 2020.

Far more than I have ever known. Obviously people were keen and wanting to get outside!

In comparison, there were only two applications from 1st January 2020 to 21st March 2020.

The person who applied on the 22nd March 2020 was allocated a plot on the 26th March 2020.

So you see, we had a very short waiting list in March 2020.

I think 28 was the most we had waiting at any one time during 2020.

By the end of March 2021 there were still 21 on the waiting list.

During 2021 the waiting list was fluctuating around the 20 mark.
It was back up to 25 by the beginning of September and down to 17 by the end of December 2021.

By the end of March 2022, the waiting list was back up to 25.
That 25th person was allocated a plot on 8th August - just 4 months of waiting.
Even then at the beginning of August, there were still 18 on the waiting list.
We currently have 19 on the waiting list with 4 of those "on hold" as the applicants didn't want to take on the commitment at the time of the offer and asked to remain on the list for Spring next year.

We had in total :-
30 applications in 2019
49 applications in 2020
32 applications in 2021
31 so far in 2022

In 2020, 15 tenants gave up and there were 2 terminations.
In 2021, 15 tenants gave up and there was 1 termination.
So far in 2022, 12 tenants have given up with 2 terminations.
Several of those tenants had full plots and because of the large waiting list it was decided to split those plots into two so as to give as many people as possible the opportunity of having a plot.
The usual reasons for giving up were:- work, family, health and moving away.
As for the terminations, 3 were for non-payment of rent and 2 for non-cultivation.

As for the waiting list in general, when applicants were offered a plot, many decided that they no longer wanted a plot or had taken a plot elsewhere or did not reply to emails and text messages. That accounted for 33 applications out of 95 in the last 2 and 3/4 years.

Site Inspections Report

Three inspections of all the plots were done in 2020 and four in 2021.
There have been two site inspections so far this year
The first inspection was at the beginning of June and the condition and cultivation of the plots was very good.

However, the second inspection at the end of July, it was noticeable that several plots had become more weedy between the two inspections with only 75 out of 119 plots considered good.
16 plots in progress (most of those were new tenants)
22 plots could be better (dug and cultivated but lot of weeds)
5 plots either not started or very little done since the beginning of the season) Those 5 tenants had a warning letter.
1 vacant (half plots) – at the time of the inspection, but now re-let.

There are currently 38 full plots and 81 half plots.
A further site inspection will be done towards the end of October.

Site Manger's Report

Site improving every year with more tenants helping to maintain the site
Toilet working well with waste being emptied
Vehicular gate has been replaced in the last year

No other improvements on the site anticipated in the last year apart from a new shed at the top of the allotment

4. Discussion over a new shed at the top of the allotments. Estimate received of £4,500 for replacing the shed like for like. The decision at the meeting was to opt for a smaller shed and spend closer to £2,000. The committee will source a smaller shed. Half the cost of the replacement shed will be met by a grant from PTC that will not have to be repaid to the Council. The other half of the shed costs will either come from funds from the tenants or a further loan from the Council that will have to be repaid.

With us having a smaller shed in the future, the decision was the sheds will only have communal wheel barrows and tools in the sheds. All the tenants own tools or wheel barrows must be kept on tenants plots.

5. PTC will continue to have a hands-off approach to the allotment with the Committee and Association running the day-to-day functions of the site.
Any issues or concerns are raised with the Council if the Committee can not resolve as has recently happened.
6. The annual rent to PTC remains at £1,000 and this amount is satisfactory as far as the tenants are concerned.
7. There can be no improvement on the running costs of the allotment than there currently is. There is sufficient money being received each year to meet our liabilities.
8. Continue with the plan to have the grass cut by the contractor at the beginning of the growing season and the end of the growing season. In between the tenants will be encouraged to cut the grass.
9. Lengthy discussion about whether to increase the rental charge by £10 for a full plot and £5 for a half plot. Most of the tenants that replied to the survey advised they were happy with an increase. However, at the AGM because of the cost of living crisis the decision was to maintain the current rental amounts at £17.50 and £35.00.

Due to the ever increasing bank charges this year all plot holders will be encouraged to settle future costs via BACS etc and NOT by cheque.

10. PTC will cut the hedges they own in the winter of 2022. The Committee have requested that the new owners of the Farmers field cut their hedge this winter as well.
11. The new whips are growing well. There have been some losses over the year but more being ordered free of charge to fill in the gaps.
12. Pests are a constant problem at the allotments, and it is up to the tenants to control them themselves on their plots – but not to use poison.